

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A cartridge apparatus for use in treating an airway condition of a patient and for use in combination with a handle sized to be hand-grasped by an operator and having an actuator to be selectively actuated by said operator, said cartridge comprising:
 - an elongated implant of biocompatible material sized to be embedded within a tissue of said airway;
 - a needle having a distal tip for penetrating into said tissue, said needle having an axially extending bore;
 - at least one of needle marking on said needle near said distal tip and positioned to indicate a depth of penetration of said distal tip into a tissue and a location of said implant;
 - said implant disposed within said bore at said distal tip;
 - said cartridge having a proximal end adapted to be coupled to said handle for said implant to be ejected from said distal tip upon actuation of said actuator[[.]];
 - at least one handle marking on said handle in proximity with said actuator, said handle markings corresponding to said needle marking and positioned to illustrate a degree of exposure of said implant from said distal tip in response to a movement of said actuator.
2. (Original) A cartridge according to claim 1 wherein said actuator includes a driver positioned to move upon actuation of said actuator, said cartridge further comprising:
 - an obturator disposed for slideable movement within said bore of said needle;
 - said obturator disposed to be moved by said driver toward said implant upon actuation of said actuator when said cartridge is coupled to said handle.
3. (Original) A cartridge according to claim 2 wherein:

said obturator is carried within said bore of said needle for movement therewith when said cartridge is uncoupled from said handle.

4. (Original) A cartridge according to claim 2 wherein said bore is positioned relative to said proximal end for said driver to be slide-ably received within said bore when said cartridge is coupled to said handle.
5. (Original) A cartridge according to claim 1 wherein said handle has a handle coupling having a predetermined geometry, said cartridge further comprising:
 a cartridge coupling at said proximal end of said cartridge and having a mating geometry to mate with said predetermined geometry with said cartridge and handle aligned for said implant to be ejected from said distal tip upon actuation of said actuator.
6. (Original) A cartridge according to claim 5 further comprising a release for releasing said cartridge from said handle.
7. (Original) A cartridge according to claim 1 wherein said implant is adapted to alter a dynamic response of said tissue following placement of said implant in said tissue.
8. (Original) A cartridge according to claim 1 wherein said implant includes a material for promoting tissue in-growth into said implant following placement of said implant into said tissue.
9. (Original) A cartridge according to claim 1 wherein said implant is sized slightly greater than said bore for said implant to expand upon ejection from said bore.
10. (Original) A cartridge according to claim 8 wherein said implant is formed of multiple fibers including fibers of said material for promoting tissue in-growth.

11. (Original) A cartridge according to claim 10 wherein the multiple fibers are twisted together along a length of the implant with the fibers having terminal ends at opposite ends of the implant.
12. (Original) A cartridge according to claim 10 wherein the multiple fibers are braided together.
13. (Original) A cartridge according to claim 1 wherein said cartridge is contained within a sterile container.
14. (Currently Amended) A cartridge kit for use in treating an airway condition of a patient and for use in combination with a handle sized to be hand-grasped by an operator and having an actuator mechanism to be selectively actuated by said operator, at least one handle marking on said handle in proximity with said actuator, said cartridge kit comprising:
 - a container;
 - a plurality of cartridge contained within said container with each comprising:
 - an implant of biocompatible material sized to be embedded within a tissue of said airway;
 - a needle having a distal tip for penetrating into said tissue, said needle having an axially extending bore;
 - said implant disposed within said bore at said distal tip;
 - at least one of needle marking on said needle near said distal tip and positioned to indicate a depth of penetration of said distal tip into a tissue and a location of said implant, said needle marking corresponding to said handle marking;
 - a proximal end adapted to be coupled to said handle for said implant to be ejected from said distal tip upon actuation of said actuator.

15. (Original) A cartridge kit according to claim 14 wherein said actuator includes a driver positioned to move upon actuation of said actuator, each of said cartridges further comprising:

an obturator disposed for slideable movement within said bore of said needle;
said obturator disposed to be moved by said driver toward said implant upon actuation of said actuator when said cartridge is coupled to said handle.

16. (Original) A cartridge kit according to claim 15 wherein:

said obturator is carried within said bore of said needle for movement therewith when said cartridge is uncoupled from said handle.

17. (Original) A cartridge kit according to claim 15 wherein said bore is positioned relative to said proximal end for said driver to be slideably received within said bore when said cartridge is coupled to said handle.

18. (Original) A cartridge kit according to claim 14 wherein said handle has a handle coupling having a predetermined geometry, each of said cartridges further comprising:
a cartridge coupling at said proximal end of said cartridge and having a mating geometry to mate with said predetermined geometry with said cartridge and handle aligned for said implant to be ejected from said distal tip upon actuation of said actuator.

19. (Original) A cartridge kit according to claim 18 further comprising a release for releasing said cartridge from said handle.

20. (Original) A cartridge kit according to claim 14 wherein said implant is adapted to alter a dynamic response of said tissue following placement of said implant in said tissue.

21. (Original) A cartridge kit according to claim 14 wherein said implant includes a material for promoting tissue in-growth into said implant following placement of said implant into said tissue.

22. (Original) A cartridge kit according to claim 14 wherein said implant is sized slightly greater than said bore for said implant to expand upon ejection from said bore.
23. (Original) A cartridge kit according to claim 21 wherein said implant is formed of multiple fibers including fibers of said material for promoting tissue in-growth.
24. (Original) A cartridge kit according to claim 23 wherein the multiple fibers are twisted together along a length of the implant with the fibers having terminal ends at opposite ends of the implant.
25. (Original) A cartridge kit according to claim 23 wherein the multiple fibers are braided together.
26. (Original) A cartridge kit according to claim 23 wherein said cartridge is container is sterile.
27. (Original) A cartridge according to claim 1, wherein the proximal end of the cartridge includes a plurality of raised gripping elements.